(c) Does not arise.

Naxal activities in States

†843. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that naxal activities in various States have increased in recent times and the concerned States have apprised the Central Government of this development;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by Government to contain naxal activities in the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) The quantum of naxal violence was particularly high in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Maharashtra during 2004 as compared to 2003.

(c) The Central Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to tackle the problem of naxalism which includes (a) having a peace dialogue by the affected States, wherever feasible, with naxal groups willing to abjure violence, (b) modernization and strengthening of the State Police forces, long term deployment of Para Military forces, intensified intelligence based well-coordinated anti-naxalite operations, (c) focused attention on integrated development of the affected areas and (d) removal of socio cultural alienation of people, gearing up of public grievances redressal system and creation of Local Resistance Groups.

Prisoners in Tihar Jail

844. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of prisoners, including women, above the age of 65 years, presently lodged in various jails in the country and particularly in Tihar Jail in Delhi;

(b) whether it is a fact that these prisoners have become very weak;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to release these aged prisoners on humanitarian grounds; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT): (a) The figures about the number of prisoners above the age of 65 years lodged in various jails in the country are not available. However as per statistics compiled by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), there were 34,093 prisoners above the age of 50 years including women as on 31st December 2002, in various jails in the country. In Tihar Jail, there were 471 prisoners (including women) above the age of 50 years on that date.

(b) to (d) The National Human Rights Commission has issued guidelines to all the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for premature release of prisoners. One of the eligibility criteria suggested in these guidelines for premature release is that the convicted prisoner undergoing the sentence of live imprisonment should be of the age of 65 years or above and he or she should have served atleast 7 years of imprisonment including the remissions. The decisions regarding premature release are generally taken by the concerned State Government on the recommendations of the State Sentence Review Board made on the basis of facts & merit of each case as per the eligibility criteria.

Talks with ULFA

845. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government have expressed its willingness to talk to the outlawed ULFA on its own terms;

(b) if so, the terms set by the ULFA; and

(c) what were the Centre's constraints in accepting the ULFA's conditions unilaterally?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) to (c) The Government had received an appeal from Prof. Indira Goswami for "Peace Talks" with United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). The appeal indicated the willingness of ULFA to hold talks with the Government of India without pre-conditions, and also specifically referred to their 'core demand' of sovereignty. In reply to the appeal, it was reiterated that the Government of India had consistently expressed its willingness to talk to all groups, which were prepared to abjure the path of violence.